

## ONLINE TRAVEL ITINERARY TAKES A NEW LOOK AT THE PRESIDENTS

Peering out from currency and official portraits, the American presidents often seem like the stuff of grammar school recitation, monuments, and the naming of public buildings. The truth, of course, is far different. Though some are largely forgotten by the American public, these men, whether in the country's rough days as a frontier nation or as a nuclear superpower locked in cold war, breathed the rarefied air of the nation's highest post, living in what was likely an exhilarating, and at times surreal, world.

**SMITH DISCUSSES THE PHENOMENON IN WHICH PRESIDENTS, BECAUSE OF THEIR OMNIPRESENCE IN THE MEDIA, BECOME LIKE "VIRTUAL FAMILY MEMBERS."** VISITORS TO PRESIDENTIAL HOMES AND SITES, HE SAYS, CAN GET BEHIND THE OFFICIAL PERSONA TO DISCOVER THE REAL HUMAN BEING WHO FOUND HIMSELF IN THIS POSITION OF UNEQUALLED POWER AND EXPOSURE.

The office made the presidents larger than life, so it is often surprising to discover the details of their humanity. To help get inside their lives, the National Park Service, in partnership with the White House Historical Association and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, has produced "American Presidents," an online travel itinerary comprised of places associated with the 43 men who have occupied the office. The latest in a series offered by the National Park Service to showcase properties in the National Register of Historic Places, the itinerary is an expansive resource not only for the traveler, but for anyone interested in knowing more about the presidents and their lives.

**THE ITINERARY LEADS OFF WITH ESSAYS BY PRESIDENTIAL HISTORIANS MICHAEL BESCHLOSS AND RICHARD NORTON SMITH.**

These ruminations on the office, the individuals, and the power of place set the tone. Smith discusses the phenomenon in which presidents, because of their omnipresence in the media, become like "virtual family members." Visitors to presidential homes and sites, he says, can get behind the official persona to discover the real human being who found himself in this position of unequalled power and exposure.

"Sometimes it's the personal detail, not the great deed, that makes the connection," writes Smith. "The fact that Gerald R. Ford, born Leslie L. King, Jr., did not meet his birth father until he was 17 years of age may strike a more responsive chord among his grandchildren's generation than his role in the Helsinki Accords or the SALT II treaty." When clothing merchant Harry Truman's small business failed in 1922, he moved into his mother-in-law's house in Independence, Missouri, resolving to live simply and pay off his debt. By the time he left the Oval Office, Truman still could not afford a home of his own, so he moved back into the unassuming house at 219 North Delaware Street, which is far more than a presidential residence, but a symbol of a president's character.

Smith's essay offers insight into a host of presidents via their personal residences and places associated with their lives as ordinary citizens. How did 10-year-old Herbert Hoover's hours in a silent Quaker meeting-

house shape the president who would grapple with the Great Depression? As John Adams reeled with the loss of the 1800 election and grieved the death of his alcoholic son, did it occur to him that the name of the family



farm where he had retired—Peacefield—was cruelly ironic?

Michael Beschloss offers a look at the presidency over time, how it either shaped—or was shaped by—historical events. From the heady era of George Washington, the self-effacing yet charismatic "old hero," to the weary days of the Lyndon Baines Johnson administration, beset by social upheaval and the Vietnam War, he documents the presidency's changing character. America's ascent as a superpower after World War II brought a

**Above: Thomas Jefferson's Monticello in Charlottesville, Virginia. Right: Lindenwald, Martin Van Buren's home in Kinderhook, New York.**





period of unprecedented authority. “The office was provided with new theatrical props,” writes Beschloss. Among them were a presidential seal, a designer-painted Air Force One, and signature flourishes such as John F. Kennedy’s penchant for two-button suits, which started a fashion trend.

**“AMERICAN PRESIDENTS” MAKES THIS VERY RICH HISTORY AVAILABLE IN 73** places associated with the country’s leaders. Nearly half of the sites are part of the National Park System. The list runs chronologically, beginning with George Washington, with at least one property associated with each president and in many cases, more.

Three sites, for example, are under Thomas Jefferson: Monticello, the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, DC, and Poplar Forest, his retreat in Virginia. A page is devoted to each property, explaining its history, significance, architectural details,

The restoration of the Kennedy family’s nine-room Colonial Revival house in Brookline, Massachusetts, has turned the place into a museum. To the visitor, it is 1917, a hopeful time for the young family. But the tragic legacy is just beneath the surface. These places are remarkable in their power to illuminate unknown aspects of the presidents’ time in office.

Beschloss writes, “Presidential reputations are constantly fluctuating . . . as we see them in more distant hindsight, the phenomenon that historian Barbara Tuchman so vividly called ‘the lantern on the stern.’” What Beschloss calls the “strong presidency” of the 20th century grew out of FDR’s leadership in World War II and continued as his successors faced the Cold War, the standoff over the Berlin Wall, and the showdown during the Cuban Missile Crisis. The Cold War threatened to become hot as the nuclear age raised the stakes beyond

**Left: The Hermitage, Andrew Jackson’s Tennessee home. Near right: Teddy Roosevelt’s Sagamore Hill. Far right: Jimmy Carter’s boyhood home.**

FAR RIGHT NPS/HABS



and how to plan a visit. Stitched into the text is a succinct account of each president’s time in office and what was happening in the country.

When Millard Fillmore was trying to keep the Union from disintegrating over slavery in the early 1850s, he may have longed for the simple one-and-a-half-story clapboard house in East Aurora, New York, where he and his wife lived before his career took off.

Zachary Taylor’s home in frontier Kentucky was where the future war hero and president learned how to ride, shoot, and survive in the outdoors. The robust career soldier, nicknamed “Old Rough and Ready,” served a little more than a year in office before dying of acute gastroenteritis.

Benjamin Harrison campaigned from the grand porch of his 16-room Italianate house in Indianapolis, and regularly gave speeches to crowds assembled on his lawn, while Dwight D. Eisenhower liked to relax on the back porch of his farm in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, painting landscapes.

comprehension. “Many Americans,” Beschloss writes, “felt that literally one human being was shielding them against a worldwide threat.”

**WITH THE SOVIET UNION’S FALL IN 1991, THE CHARACTER OF THE PRESIDENCY** changed again. In the absence of crisis—like the Cold War, the Depression, or World War II—the public’s desire for a powerful executive diminished. There was a backlash against Big Government. Beschloss writes, “There was the prospect that the clock would be turned back to the post-Civil War period, [to a time] when speakers of the House and Senate majority leaders often dictated to presidents and were sometimes better known and more influential than the men in the White House.” Andrew Johnson, Rutherford B. Hayes, Benjamin Harrison, and Chester Arthur come to mind.

Given the unenviable task of following the martyred Abraham Lincoln into office, Johnson inherited the difficult post-Civil War reconstruction. He was nearly impeached, finally retreating to his homestead in Tennessee, which had suffered mightily during the

war. The refuge is memorialized today in the Andrew Johnson National Historic Site. In the time that followed the unprecedented drama of civil war, Rutherford B. Hayes took on the end of reconstruction, labor strife, immigration issues, and civil service reform. A successful attorney before he took office, he returned to Spiegel Grove, Ohio, at the end of his term to a 31-room mansion constantly under renovation—like Jefferson’s Monticello. Hayes, who loved the wraparound veranda, hastened to install indoor plumbing.

**THE ITINERARY CAPTURES THE COMPLEXITY OF THE TIMES ASSOCIATED WITH** each president’s era, whether a time of monumental upheaval or uneventful prosperity. In 1819, during the James Monroe presidency, the nation was hit by a depression, even as slavery was already threatening to tear it apart.

When Calvin Coolidge took office in 1923, he restored confidence after the Harding scandals, and according to the itinerary’s text, “symbolized stability during a time of rapid, disorienting social change.” While Jimmy Carter was praised for his success in brokering compromise between Israel and Egypt in the Camp David Accords, the lingering hostage crisis in Iran was—and remains—a cloud over his presidency.

William Henry Harrison lived at the edge of a frontier nation and his character seemed well suited. But the fine plantation-style house he built while governor of the Indiana Territory seemed at odds with the image he meant to portray during the 1840 presidential campaign:

In a “Learn More” section, the itinerary links to a large selection of related websites, such as those of state tourism offices, associated parks and historic sites, private museums, and presidential libraries. “American Presidents” also links to related itineraries, such as “Journey Through Hallowed Ground,” in part a look at the presidents whose lives are intertwined with a corridor that runs from southern Pennsylvania through Maryland and down into Virginia’s Piedmont. There are also links to National Park Service Teaching with Historic Places lesson plans, an ongoing series of 135 online teacher guides based on national historic landmarks and National Register properties. The documentation used to nominate the featured sites for their honored status—providing in-depth analysis of their historic significance—is also accessible through links.

**THOUGH SOME OF THE SITES IN “AMERICAN PRESIDENTS” ARE IN THE** National Park System, others are preserved by state and local authorities, friends groups, foundations, and individuals. Many places served variably as a refuge from the pressure of the presidency, an extension of the Oval Office, or a home where one re-acclimated to the life of a normal citizen. But each presents a glimpse of an individual and his family, and the times in which they lived. In this respect, the itinerary is a remarkable educational tool.

Richard Norton Smith’s essay is titled, appropriately, “Being There: Encountering America’s Presidents.” “You don’t have to live in the past to learn from it,” he writes, “unless you count the hours



**Far left: Harry Truman’s house in Independence, Missouri. Near left: The John Quincy Adams mansion. Right: Playing cards belonging to Dwight D. Eisenhower, embossed with the name of his presidential aircraft, “Columbine,” on view at his Pennsylvania farm, now a national historic site.**

a toughened veteran of the war of 1812 and skirmishes with Indian tribes at a time when the nation was moving steadily westward. Tecumseh, the famous Shawnee leader, actually visited Harrison’s house and promised to keep resisting. Harrison won the election, but died of pneumonia less than a month after his inauguration.

Historical events and circumstances inevitably become personal, and personal history influences how presidents deal with the challenges. This is evident in sites that show how the chief executives saw themselves, and how they wanted others to see them.

spent at these [sites], where we become immersed in a country that has never become but, like Jefferson’s Monticello, is always in the act of becoming.”

American Presidents is the 47th in the ongoing National Park Service Discover Our Shared Heritage Travel Itinerary Series. To see this and other itineraries, go to [www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/](http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/). For more information, contact Carol Shull, Chief, Heritage Education Services, National Park Service, [carol\\_shull@nps.gov](mailto:carol_shull@nps.gov).





LEFT JACK BOUCHER/NIPS/HABS, RIGHT CHARLES E. PETERSON/NIPS/HABS

## EMMERTON, INSPIRED BY JANE ADAMS' HULL HOUSE

# The Story of Seven Gables

Landmarking the Scene of a Literary Classic

**"HALF-WAY DOWN A BY-STREET OF ONE OF OUR NEW ENGLAND TOWNS STANDS** a rusty wooden house, with seven acutely-peaked gables . . ." wrote Nathaniel Hawthorne in his mid-19th century classic. Still standing, that very same "rusty wooden house," located on a side street in Salem, Massachusetts, recently became a national historic landmark.

Hawthorne memorialized the structure through his tale of a family haunted by the ghosts of ancestors killed during the witchcraft trials in 1692, the period the house actually dates to. Originally the home of a sea merchant, it is also known as the Turner-Ingersoll House. "It's a multifaceted site," says Amy Waywell, its visitor services director. "It has a very unique literary connection, but it also has a strong maritime history as well." Considered New England's oldest surviving wooden mansion, the house has history, period.

Historical archeologist Lorinda B.R. Goodwin describes it as "one of the most storied homes in the country," in *Salem: Place, Myth, and Memory*. "Its elastic histories stretch into the web of the American past and have become its principal stock and trade."

In 1668, Captain John Turner built the place, in post-Medieval style, overlooking the harbor. With time, the family added some Georgian touches, including sash windows and

interior woodwork. It slowly expanded and by 1782, when Turner's grandson lost it to debt, it was an 8,000-square-foot mansion with 17 rooms. Another Salem sea captain, Samuel Ingersoll, turned it into a



Ingersoll House are striking," Goodwin writes.

**TODAY IT HOLDS MORE THAN 2,000 ARTIFACTS, 500 PHOTOGRAPHS, AND 40** framed works although its most popular attraction might be the secret staircase spiraling up through the chimney. It was the idea of wealthy philanthropist Caroline Osgood Emmerton, who purchased the house in 1908 for just \$1 from the Upton family, the owner after the Ingersolls. A shrewd businesswoman, she knew it would be a tourist attraction—to explain how Clifford, one of the novel's characters, moved mysteriously through the house. She enlisted prominent architect Joseph Everett Chandler, who restored the house to its 17th-century appearance, adding some elements in his signature Colonial Revival style. Today, visitors see a blend of styles and furnishings. "We're very fortunate to have all these architectural styles in one place—you don't see that very often," Waywell says.

Emmerton, inspired by Jane Adams' Hull House in Chicago and London's Toynbee Hall, never intended the place to be just a tourist site. Two years after its restoration, using the profits from tours, she founded the House of the Seven Gables Settlement Association to help the hundreds of immigrants moving into the area.

**THE HOUSE ISN'T THE ONLY STRUCTURE INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL LANDMARK** designation. There is a whole historic district, including Hawthorne's nearby childhood home, which Emmerton moved there in the 1950s to save it from demolition; the circa 1830 Counting House, once the captain's office; and two other rescued properties. Although not part of the district, across the street is the historic Caroline Emmerton Hall. As part of her still thriving organization, the Federal brick building houses classrooms, a gym, a library, a computer lab, and a playground, offering children's programs on a sliding fee

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Federal structure, removing four of its seven gables. Hawthorne never saw them all, but his cousin, Susannah Ingersoll—who lived in the house her whole life—told him about them. The romance writer never acknowledged the house as a muse, but "the similarities between his fictitious house with seven gables and the Turner-

**Above: The house in 1935. Left: The house in winter.**

scale. While the focus has shifted away from immigration, Emmerton's vision still stands, funded by tourism proceeds. "The house isn't just a museum," Waywell says. "It also gives back to the community"

To find out more about the house, view the landmark nomination at [www.nps.gov/history/nhl/designations/samples/ma/ma.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/nhl/designations/samples/ma/ma.htm).

# New Life for an Old Hand

Arizona Ranch Named to National Register of Historic Places

**WHEN BRIGHAM YOUNG CAME TO THIS CORNER OF NORTHWEST ARIZONA IN 1870,** he was looking for rangeland. Young stood not far from the Grand Canyon, at the edge of the Kaibab Plateau, amidst some of the most spectacular scenery in America. His church had been so successful that its cattle operations needed more room. And today, the headquarters building at Kane Ranch, the center of the enterprise that grew out of his visit, has joined the National Register of Historic Places—the modest structure, built in 1877, “a fine example of 19th-century Mormon domestic architecture,” according to the Register nomination.

In a remote landscape with little sign of human presence, the building stands remarkably intact, exemplifying a form of folk architecture known as the “hall-and-parlor” house. Two rooms wide and one deep, the type derived from a traditional British style typically made of wood. This one, however, is made of sandstone, its earth tones apparently favored by the Mormons, who seldom used white in either religious or domestic buildings.

cial pressure from the federal government. The Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1877 ordered the Mormon Church to forfeit property not used strictly for religious practices. Children of polygamous marriages were disinherited.

The church kept the cattle operation by selling it to John Willard Young, Brigham’s son. In the twilight of the Old West, he retooled the ranch as a place for well-heeled sportsmen to experience the thrill of an American safari, to see the landscape and its fast-disappearing way of life. In 1892, Buffalo Bill Cody, recruited as a guide, escorted a group of British dignitaries here. Some of the trim is believed to have been installed to enhance the headquarters building for the occasion. While the visitors were smitten with the scenery, they found the place too remote, and Young eventually sold out.

**TODAY, MUCH OF THE REGION IS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF PUBLIC AGENCIES.** Ranchers graze their livestock under permit. The Kane property, and nearby Two Mile Ranch, occupy about 100 miles along the Grand



**Far left: The nearby Kaibab Plateau. Near left: Remnants of an old corral. Right: The headquarters building at Kane Ranch.**

Though there was white limestone in a nearby canyon, the house was built with red sandstone from the Vermilion Cliffs 10 miles away. Young himself was said to have advocated the durability of such structures.

**HE APPROVED OF THE PLATEAU’S GRASSLANDS TOO, AND ITS NEARBY SPRINGS,** establishing the New Canaan Cooperative Stock Company, like similar enterprises jointly owned by the church and its members, benefiting both group and individual. Business endeavors, by stricture, stressed unity, modest consumption, equality, and group independence. The ranch was named for Thomas Leiper Kane, Young’s friend and an ex-military officer.

The late 19th century brought anti-polygamy legislation and finan-

Canyon’s environmentally sensitive North Rim. In 2005, the Grand Canyon Trust and the Conservation Fund bought both ranches—nearly a million acres—to foster environmentally responsible practices while re-establishing the cattle operation using the headquarters building. The Trust has embarked on extensive conservation in partnership with Northern Arizona University and federal agencies, making use of what associate director Rick Moore calls “an aggressive volunteer program.”

For more information, visit the National Register of Historic Places website, [www.nps.gov/history/nr](http://www.nps.gov/history/nr). Also go to the Grand Canyon Trust site at [www.grandcanyontrust.org](http://www.grandcanyontrust.org) or the Conservation Fund site at [www.conservationfund.org](http://www.conservationfund.org).



ALL PHOTOS GRAND CANYON TRUST